DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 002 EM 010 989

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TITLE	Do Federal Programs Really Work? A Study of the Effect of One Project on Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Maine.
INSTITUTION	Maine State Dept. of Educational and Cultural Services, Augusta.
PUB DATE	Jan 73
NOTE	5p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Audiovisual Centers; Educational Development; *Federal Aid; *Information Dissemination; *Instructional Materials Centers; *Library Standards; Program Evaluation; School Libraries; Secondary Schools
IDENTIFIERS	Elementary Secondary Education Act Title III

ABSTRACT

The effects of a federal grant may go far beyond the school system involved. One high school in Maine received $275,000 for a library/media center to see what a well-equipped and stocked, and adequately staffed library/media center would do to improve the quality of the learning opportunities for students. A survey of all Maine school superintendents and librarians revealed that visits to the federally-funded center led them to improve their own libraries in such things as atmosphere, cooperation between teachers and library staff, size of audiovisual materials collections, and changes in priorities for their own libraries. It was concluded, therefore, that the effects of this one federal grant for upgrading education reached far beyond the single school system involved. (RH)

ED 076002

DO FEDERAL PROGRAMS REALLY WORK?

A Study of the Effect of One Project
on Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Maine
January, 1973

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DO FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS REALLY WORK?

Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 permits grants to local public school administrative units to test new ideas that might improve educational opportunities for elementary and secondary school students. Federal support may be used for a maximum of 36 months.

Most Title III projects have had many visitors. The reports of the accomplishments and the problems of the projects have been reported widely through a variety of media. However, no one will ever know the full extent to which Title III has influenced education in Maine.

One Title III project, the Waterville High School Library/Media Center, which was known to have had many visitors, was selected to determine the effect it had had on Maine schools. Questionnaires were sent to all Maine superintendents and all persons listed as school librarians.

Between 1966 and 1969, the City of Waterville was granted $200,000 in Federal funds under ESEA Title III and $75,000 under ESEA Title II, School Library Services. The purpose of the grants was to demonstrate to the schools of the State what a well-equipped and stocked, adequately staffed library/media center could do to improve the quality of the learning opportunities for students.

The Waterville School Board provided 8,000 square feet of floor space in its new high school building, 3,000 more than in the gymnasium.

With Federal funds, the area was carpeted, partitioned and equipped with a wide variety of furniture. An extensive collection of audiovisual equipment and materials and a rich library of books and other print materials were acquired.

The staff was increased from one librarian and a clerk to nine full-time and one half-time persons.

Since the termination of Federal funding in 1969, eight full-time staff members have been retained. The City of Waterville has also provided local and State funds generously for the purchase of new publications necessary to maintain the quantity and quality of the library/media collection.

A December, 1972 questionnaire to all Maine school superintendents and librarians produced the following information:

Of the 105 superintendents responding, 66 reported that they had visited the center, 27 more than once. Since visiting Waterville, 21 of the 66 indicated that additional space had been provided in their libraries; 4, additional personnel; 27, both additional space and personnel; and 14 had added neither. Three of the 66 stated that improvements effected in their libraries were not the result of observation at Waterville. On the other hand, 2 of the 14 who reported no improvement commented that they had been unsuccessful in obtaining the necessary local appropriations.

Responses to Questionnaire by Superintendents

Number of Visits	Additional Space Provided	Additional Personnel Employed	Additional Space Provided and Additional Personnel Employed	Neither Additional Space nor Personnel
One	14	3	11	11
More than one	7	1	16	3
Totals	21	4	27	14

Of the 116 school librarians who responded to a different questionnaire, 79 indicated that they had visited the library/media center, 51 of them more than once.

Of the 79, 52 indicated that as a result of their observations in Waterville, they effected changes in one or more areas in their own libraries.

The responses are summarized in the following table:

Responses to Questionnaire by School Librarians

Reported Area of Change	Number of Visits by Librarians	
	One	More than one
Change in priorities	5	16
Size of book and other printed materials collection	3	14
Number of periodicals subscribed to	5	5
Increased use of microfilm	1	8
Size of audiovisual materials collection	5	22
Increased use of graphic arts	1	6
Changes in processing, classification, cataloging	2	5
Use of space, arrangement of furniture, equipment, etc.	7	15
Cooperation between teachers and library staff	4	23
Atmosphere of library/media center	4	28
Added curriculum activities in library/media center	2	13
Total number of instances of change	39	155
No change	15	12

CONCLUSIONS

No single school library/media center in Maine in the immediate future is likely to be able to provide resources for teaching and learning as rich as those available at Waterville High School, because no school is likely to receive an infusion of $275,000 in Federal dollars for this purpose in a three-year period.

A significant number of Maine public school libraries, both secondary and elementary, have additional space and additional staff as a result of the Waterville project.

The most numerous areas of change reported by librarians because of ideas obtained during visits to the center are in this order -- library atmosphere, cooperation between teachers and library staff, size of audiovisual materials collections, and changes in priorities. Three of these most numerously reported changes do not cost money.

It seems reasonable to conclude that this project did, indeed, make a significant contribution to the improvement of educational opportunities for thousands of Maine school children.

The Waterville High School Library/Media Center provides visitors from other school systems with a goal toward which to work, a 1973 ideal from which portions may be adapted, as attested by several letters and other unsolicited comments received during the survey.